

SalesLogix steers coach operator to greater efficiency

The recent implementation of Softline Enterprise's award-winning CRM product, SalesLogix, has set the wheels in motion for a new dimension of visibility and operational performance for national tour bus operator Big Sky Coaches.

The logo for SalesLOGIX, with 'Sales' in a standard sans-serif font and 'LOGIX' in a larger, bold, all-caps sans-serif font, followed by a registered trademark symbol (®).

Big Sky Coaches has been in business for 27 years and operates a diverse fleet of vehicles throughout Southern Africa to tour operators, charter clients, contract clients and intercity passengers. The company markets, co-ordinates and manages transportation to events throughout the country, and its large database of regular clients is testimony to its success in the industry.

Ashley Ellington, MD, Softline Enterprise, says the business needed more visibility into its operations and accounting system, and a way to spread the workload and information across various departments. This is where the stability and customisation of SalesLogix impressed the client the most.

Antinomy, Softline Enterprise Business Partner of the Year 2007, undertook the implementation. According to its Sales and Marketing Director, Lee Ann Mounter, Big Sky Coaches needed a way to produce and distribute quotations quickly and professionally, and then expand this process into operations.

MD of Big Sky Coaches, Abel Erasmus Jnr, explains that they conducted a manual operations and accounting system, using spreadsheets for quotes and confirmations, as well as job cards. "This was a time-consuming process. Operations staff had to keep an onerous filing system to match the initial request for a quote with the confirmation sent to the client. Once a quote was accepted, a manual job card had to be compiled the day before departure, which not only led to incomplete job cards but also long working hours for the operations staff."

Another glaring operational flaw was that the sharing of information was done verbally, or not at all. One person was responsible for following the entire client process, as vital information such as that of loading points, time of loading and the personal information of event organisers and clients was not always written down. As the workload couldn't be shared, all the company's client information was held by only a few key sales and operations personnel. The most pressing problem however was uncertainty regarding turnover at the various branches. Although it was possible to estimate turnover from the bookings sheets by judging how many trips were leaving in a specific period, this was hardly the best way of doing things.

In conjuring up the remedy to its business dilemmas, Erasmus saw it essential to involve all sales and operations staff from the start of the SalesLogix implementation. "This was also the best way to secure employee buy-in, as everyone had a say in the detailed specifications of the software."

After the customisation and implementation was complete, what impressed staff most, Erasmus says, was the stability of the customisations and deployment thereof. "We still saw the capturing of future opportunities as a big challenge since we had decided to do a complete switch from manual operations in this regard. But, with the buy-in of sales staff, this wasn't difficult at all and was in fact a good learning process for all."

Mounter says the implementation was greatly aided by the positive attitude at Big Sky Coaches. "SalesLogix is a very intuitive product, and in this case customised to the extent that it made perfect sense to all the users. The staff had a very open attitude, and this I believe is always 90 percent of the battle won."

About Softline Enterprise

Softline Enterprise is a leading supplier of business management solutions, delivering performance and web capability that is essential for success in today's competitive business environment. Addressing finance, construction, distribution, manufacturing, services, retail requirements, CRM and eBusiness, the product offering also supports and consolidates activity across expanding business needs. Available on a wide range of operating systems and compatible with a host of industry leading databases, it gives mid-range and larger organisations the reliability and scalability required to keep ahead of competitors.

Softline Enterprise products are supported through a network of accredited partners which bring together the individual product and service components to deliver a complete and tailored solution.

Softline Enterprise products include:

Sage 1000 - a new, single business management software application designed to span operations across mid-sized businesses, integrating front office CRM and back office ERP systems. By sharing information between functional areas, businesses can enjoy greater efficiency, experience fewer errors from re-keying of data, and increase service levels by making it easier to give accurate, timely information from across the business to customers.

Sage Line 500 – offering all the advantages of a traditional ERP solution, Sage Line 500 provides tight financial control with full visibility of costs and powerful reporting tools. In addition it includes an evaluation of market trends to assist customers to make informed strategic decisions. The product also manages cash flow through close budget control and efficient purchase requisitioning and supports international business with multi-language, multi-currency, multi-company features. It includes vertical solutions such as manufacturing, construction and retail.

Sage SalesLogix - an affordable, fully scalable and powerful CRM solution that is easily customised for medium sized and divisions of large corporate businesses. Sage SalesLogix is designed to integrate seamlessly with other business software and back office applications, providing businesses with a holistic view of each customer.

Sage X3 Enterprise - Sage X3 Enterprise covers all of the planning, operational and administrative functional areas required by mid-sized business, all integrated into a single enterprise solution. All functional areas are managed via one common database – updated on a real-time-basis – ensuring data integrity and accuracy while enabling all departments to share information efficiently.

About Softline

Softline is a leading provider of accounting, payroll, CRM and ERP software solutions to small, medium and large sized companies. Founded in 1988 by Ivan Epstein, Alan Osrin and Steven Cohen, Softline was established during the formative years of the software industry and listed on the JSE Securities Exchange South Africa in February 1997. Softline expanded to establish a strong position within its area of focus in South Africa and Australia. Focused on the development of accounting, payroll, CRM and ERP software solutions, Softline has a 20 year track record as a market leader. The group has a broad range of products offering users a variety of software solutions to run their businesses efficiently. Softline's leading brands include Softline Accpac, Softline Enterprise, Softline Pastel (Accounting and Payroll) and Softline VIP. The combination of the group's product offerings provide Softline customers with comprehensive, well-branded accounting, payroll, CRM and ERP software solutions. In November 2003, Softline was acquired by the Sage Group plc, a FTSE 100 company. The software group includes market-leading businesses throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, North America, South Africa and Australia, supplying business software to the small, medium and large sized business community. Softline has a solid track record of profitability and cash generation. The group delivers quality accounting, payroll, CRM and ERP software solutions that improve the efficiencies of businesses around the world.

About Sage

The Sage Group plc is a leading global supplier of business management software solutions and related products and services, principally for small to medium-sized enterprises. Formed in 1981, Sage was floated on the London Stock Exchange in 1989 and now employs over 14,800 people worldwide. For more information go to www.sage.co.uk.